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ABSTRACT

This paper explains that change is part of every language, noting that it occurs from both internal manipulation (e.g., youth culture) and external influences (contact with other languages). The paper focuses on external influences as they apply to Japanese and discusses how much external influence, specifically English, is too much. Today, Japan utilizes more than 30,000 English words, many of which have been "Japanized." This migration to English has led to the abandonment of the original Japanese translations, and the characters that accompany them have given way to "Katakana," the Japanese syllabic set for foreign words. This paper examines the impact of English on Japanese, noting the linguistic and social aspects of Japanese. Information comes from observations, interviews, and experiences as a teacher of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to Japanese students of varying ages. It discusses the following: the linguistics of Japanese; writing systems; variants of speech; dialects of Japanese; sociolinguistics of Japanese; the impact of English on Japan; and how to teach EFL to Japanese people. The paper examines 5 years of fieldwork, offering four case studies of different types of students in different teaching contexts. It concludes with advice for prospective EFL teachers in Japan. (SM)

Accounts of an Eikaiwa Sensei

Sociolinguistics of Japanese and the Impact of EFL on its Society

By Joe Drakos
August 10th, 2001

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Introduction

As the world becomes internationalized it is becoming more and more important to find a common mean to where we can all communicate effectively. A language is required to which all of us can gather and understand each other regardless of our many intricate, cultural backgrounds. The best way we as humankind have been able to establish this type of relationship is through the use of a single language, English. It is unclear how this

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language became the world's lingua franca but it can be assumed that it is what it is because of the onset of international commerce and its ease of use in explaining ideas. Now, students in most, if not all first world societies are required to study English to some extent regardless of their future career plans. But the use of English as a form of universal communication doesn't stop there. We are finding that English is working its way into other languages' lexicons as well. To put it in easier terms, every language I have encountered utilizes some English words for specific ideas. For example, Chinese, which is a very ethnocentric language, takes particular English words and "Sinocizes" them. The word salad and brandy become shala and bailandi with regular characters used only to produce the sound of the thing. When listening to Tagalog, the Filipino language, one can hear whole phrases of English during a news broadcast. Yet none of these can really compare to the impact English has made on the Japanese.

Change is a part of every language. All languages change over time due to many things such as change of word meanings, development of new idioms and advances in technology. These changes occur from both internal manipulation (i.e. youth culture) and external influence, simply other languages. I will look at the latter advocator of linguistic change as it applies particularly to the Japanese language. Moreover, how much external influence, specifically English, is too much? Today, Japan utilizes more than 30 thousand English words. Some of the words can easily be recognized by a native English speaker, while others have been "Japanized" or made to fit a Japanese concept. This migration to English has more or less abandoned their original Japanese translations as well as the valuable characters that accompany them which have, in turn, given way to Katakana, the Japanese syllabic set used for foreign words.

Furthermore, this paper will focus on this impact as well as touch briefly on the linguistic and social aspect of Japanese. This paper is written in a field work fashion as the research comes less from books and more from my observations, interviews and experiences while living here among the Japanese. My job as an English teacher requires me to encounter this mixing of languages on a daily basis, therefore I

have opted to use my students as interviewees per their permission. Each interview looks at a particular student's purposes for studying English, their experience and their successes and failures while studying. The ages range from elementary school to adult with varying education levels. Following the interview I will express my personal thoughts as well as others who work in the Eikaiwa (English conversation) industry concerning the cultural integration that has become in Japan because of this relatively young field of education.

This paper will focus on this impact as well as the social aspect of Japanese. This paper is written in a field work fashion as the research comes less from books and more from my observations, interviews and experiences while living here among the Japanese. Considering my job as an English teacher requires me to encounter this mixing of languages on a daily basis, I have opted to use my students as interviewees.

Linguistics of Japanese

Japanese is a very interesting language and at the same time very frustrating and strict. Once classified in the Altaic language family, which includes languages such as Manchu, Mongolian and even Finnish it has since then been classed in its own family with Korean and Ryukyuan, the language spoken in Okinawa. To the average non-Japanese the language can seem rather impossible and ridiculous at times, making no sense. But this can only be the result of the strict social rules of Japanese society and the appearance of a semi-exclusive society. I use semi-exclusive because there are those who have a very open mind to non-Japanese, yet even these few still, at times, seem to retain small bits of that ethnocentric nationalism. But this is leaning into the next topic on the sociolinguistic aspect that will be covered later.

Japanese is a very limited language concerning its phonetic make up. It has five vowel sounds and fifteen consonant sounds, figure 1 shows these sounds with an English equivalent. Furthermore, each consonant sound is always combined with one of the five vowel sounds to make up a syllable. Most of these are palated and aspirated making it possible to speak Japanese without opening the mouth very wide. Convenient considering it was once rude to open the mouth widely during conversation, especially for women. There is one nasal sound that has no vowel companion. That is the "n" as in phone sound. This sound is also represented as an "m" sound in varying dialects. Blends and accents give Japanese a broader spectrum of sounds and word distinction but the language itself sounds very monotonic, seeming to have very little slight emotional expression.

Figure 1. Vowel sounds: a as in father

i as in eagle

u as in spoon

e as in plate

o as in hole

Consonant sounds: palated- s, t, n, d, z, m, g

aspirated- b, h, p

nasal- n

Blends: ch, sh, zh, ts

Also sounds p, b, m, h and n are combined with ya,

yu and yo to create various phonemes.

The writing system of Japanese is as intriguing as its spoken half. There are three different systems of writing each with its own specific purpose. The original form of writing is Kanji. Kanji are the ever-so-familiar Chinese characters. This system of writing was introduced sometime during the Heian period. Each character is made up of radicals that denote sound and meaning. Combinations of characters developed into words. It's said that the average, educated Japanese can read approximately 2,500 different Kanji. Over the years Japan has

simplified its kanji as well as developed some of its own. Therefore it is sometimes difficult for Chinese to recognize the meaning of some characters, of course the reverse is true for Japanese studying modern Chinese.

Because of the difficulty of Kanji two systems of writing were developed to ease the stress of writing, especially for women and in the use of poetry and calligraphy. It also helps differentiate between words that use the same Kanji for different meanings. These systems are known as the hiragana and katakana. These are both phonetic representations for the Japanese alphabet. Each kana is derived from a certain kanji that has been simplified into its kana form. Figure 2 below shows both hiragana and katakana while figure three shows which kanji each kana was derived from, but first let's look at the three writing systems individually.

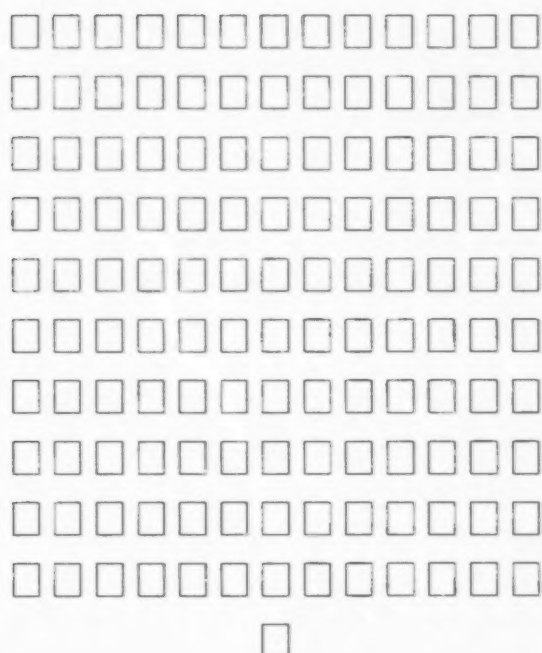
Writing systems

1. Kanji- the system of ideographs borrowed from China
2. Hiragana- A set of fifty-two symbols each one representing a phonetic sound in Japanese. Developed from a massive simplification of certain Kanji.
3. Katakana- This set is similar to Hiragana in its phonetic meaning but its structure is different. It was developed from various radicals that are used to form Kanji. It used mostly to represent words borrowed from foreign languages and place emphasis on certain words.

Below is Hiragana, the original phonetic alphabet derived from kanji, Chinese characters. There are 46 basic characters called kana. Different sounds are made by adding a "or a small circle on the upper right side of the kana. The idea was to make the written language of Japanese simpler for the use of poetry, art and for women. It begins with the five vowel sounds a, i, u, e, o. Each consecutive line precedes the respective vowel sound with a consonant sound such as "k" or "m" to create ka, ki, ku, ke, ko or ma, mi, mu, me, mo. The final sound is a nasal n sound.

Two kana “☐”(wi) and “☐”(we) have been eliminated from modern Japanese. They have been replaced by the “☐” (i) and “☐” (e) kanas, respectively. Formerly, there were two other syllables “kwa” and “gwa” which have disappeared in standard Japanese.¹

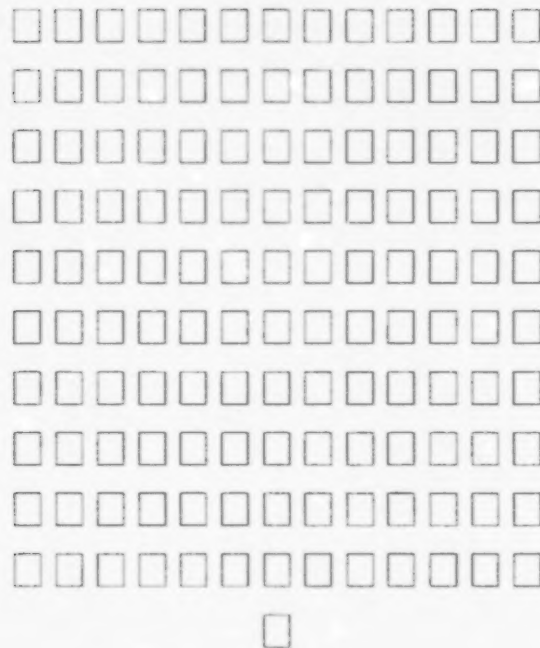
Hiragana



Next is katakana, a system that is phonetic like hiragana but is used to indicate words borrowed from other languages such as English or German, or to place emphasis on particular words. Katakana symbols are derived from radicals, the basic parts that make up kanji. For example “☐” (ee) is a radical from ☐☐ (hito) which means person. Therefore a kanji such as ☐ (nin- harmony) includes this radical.

¹ Hattori, pg18

Katana



The final and oldest system of writing is Kanji. Kanji is a collection of ideographs developed by the Chinese. The Kanji system has been known to exist since the Shang dynasty from evidence on divinational items such as animal bones and turtle shells. Originally, these were derived from pictures very similar to hieroglyphs. So it is suffice to say that a symbol for cow, human or horse looked something like the actual thing. Over a very long period of Chinese history these pictographs were simplified and combined to make the myriad of ideographs we see in today's complex version of Chinese. The development of the Chinese character base actually stopped in the Tang dynasty. New characters were, of course, developed during the times after but the actual writing structure remained the same, e.g. stroke style and order. Also, Chinese ideographs have been developed over the centuries not only by the Chinese but by other cultures that have incorporated or adopted it as its own writing practice.

Although it looks very difficult to master, many westerners say impossible, Kanji has a very simple method of compilation.

Each symbol is a combination of specific elements called radicals. They form the basis of the Kanji which specifically carry a sound and a meaning. These radicals are written in certain fashion either from up to down or left to right and has an ordered number of strokes. The radicals themselves are also Kanji in the simplest form describing one thing. Let's use the before mentioned man "亻" kanji. The reformed "亻" radical forms such kanji as 人, 仁, 和 and 休 which mean figure, work, harmony and rest respectively. Furthermore, we can see through the use of this radical all meanings have some relationship to humans.

It is said that an educated Japanese can read over 2000 Kanji but there are much more, some say even up to 5000. But the difficulty in Japanese as compared to its Chinese neighbor is the pronunciation of the Kanji. Japanese has two distinct pronunciations of Kanji, onyomu and kunyomi. These are rules of pronunciation particularly when the Kanji is spoken alone or paired with other Kanji, respectively. For example, this character (舞) which means to dance is pronounced "odo", the proper word being "odori", when used alone coupled with a Hiragana modifier, but coupled with other Kanji it is pronounced as "mai". Yet, some carry more than the standard two pronunciations. The character (舞) carries a number of pronunciations including, shita, shimo, and kuda.

As mentioned before, Kanji was significant in the development of Hiragana and Katakana. Each kana was developed from a radical or even an artsy form of the parent Kanji. The following is a chart showing some kana with its parent Kanji.

Some of the characters used to develop Hiragana²

人	亻	亻
仁	仁	仁
和	和	和
休	休	休
人	人	人
人	人	人

² Chart taken from <http://Interq.or.jp>, source written by Atsushi Yamamoto, c- 1997

Some of the characters used to develop Katakana

□□□□□	□□□□□
□□□□□	□□□□□
□□□□□	□□□ □□
□□□□□	□□□□□
□□□□□	□□□□□

Variants of speech

1. Polite speech- speech which is usually taught in FL classes
2. Male speech- a variation on certain markers, tag questions and words. This is to make the man sound stronger and cool.
3. Female speech- a form opposite male speech to express cuteness and femininity. This includes drawing out sounds to project whining or bimbo girl speech used by the youth generation. Also some girls emphasize raising the pitch in their speech to sound cute and naïve, an aspect unwelcome by most, if not all, non-Japanese males.
4. Yakuza (tough male) speech- a form a speech similar to male speech yet much stronger. It can be recognized by the rolling r/l sound. This variant developed mostly from Kansai dialect, a dialect of Japanese which is harder to understand than standard Japanese. Many young boys try to use this to sound tough and intimidating, particularly boys involved in motorcycle groups called bosozoku and yankii, punk car drivers. At most it is a phase but since the driving age in Japan is 20, one can see the level of maturity of the rising masses of undereducated young adults.

Dialects of Japanese

Dialects in Japan range from prefecture and region to prefecture and region. There are, though, some very distinct dialects of Japanese that can make it difficult for Japanese who live outside that particular dialect area and foreigners to

understand. The national dialect of Japanese is called the Kanto dialect. This is the terminology and language in which most students studying Japanese learn. This is mostly due to the fact that Tokyo, the capitol, lies at the center of the Kanto area. The surrounding prefectures that make up the Kanto plain include: Chiba, Kanagawa, Saitama, Ibaraki, Tochigi and Gunma. Even these prefectures contain a sub-dialect of Kanto "ben" (dialect).

The second, and most colorful, dialect of the Japanese language is Kansai. Osaka, Kyoto, Nara, Hyogo, Fukui, Wakayama, Hiroshima, and Shimane prefectures make up this area. The belief is that Kansai ben is much more direct and outspoken than its big brother, Kanto ben. People say that it is full of euphemisms and expressions one would not normally learn in a classroom, topped with an inflected tone. Kanto is somewhat monotonic.

The other islands and north Honshu island also have a variety of dialects which, again, differ from prefecture to prefecture. Some of these dialects are very hard to make out for even natives. Particularly Okinawan, which sounds more like Chinese with a variety of tonal inflections. Of course, Okinawan is its own language, which has been dying out slowly over the years in favor of Japanese.

Sociolinguistics of Japanese

Japanese social custom is based on the philosophies of Confucianism. Confucius was an ancient philosopher and political advisor in China during the Zhou dynasty. His philosophies and discussions have become a useful source of ethics in not only Asia but the western world as well. The basis of the Confucian belief is the idea of the benevolent man. This individual held a high sense of duty to his family, king and society. His benevolence came through performing rituals properly honoring his past ancestors and through remembering his place in society. This meant remembering the various types of relationships between people and how to act in each one. It is these relationships where Japan gets its ideas of social interaction.

Japanese has four distinct levels of speech when

communicating with each other:

- a. Formal speech- the desu/masu form, all forms of the verb end in this manner to express politeness.

Example: infinitive- taberu (to eat)

Polite form- tabemasu

The ending "masu" is placed to show politeness.

- b. Informal speech- spoken between friends and family, verbs do not carry a long suffix, polite connotations are less used.

- c. Honorific- placing the receiver in an elevated position. This type of speech is especially used in the commercial and retail sectors of business.

Example: polite- dozo mitte kudasai (please look around)

Honorific- dozo goran shitte kudasai

(same meaning, yet used by store clerks and shop owners)

- d. Humble- placing the speaker in a lower position.

It is a common assumption that Japanese are very reserved and indirect. This is very true in situations where Japanese are unfamiliar with the surrounding or people. But, when settled and comforted, Japanese can be all the opposite of what many culture books or rumored hypotheses say. The most important thing the Japanese remember when they are speaking is who they are speaking to. These hierarchical rules must be paid attention to at all times during the conversation. Before, this was strictly adhered to but as trends turn more western, the traditionalism of Japanese speech is dying out.

Hypotheses for the dying out of extra formal Japanese:

1. Loss of respect for elder peers by young.
Degradation of family structure. Less appearance of authoritative figure due to job obligations.
2. Moves toward a more western, casual style of life.
3. Difficulties and annoyances of speaking such forms as honorific and humbling.
4. Appearance of more non-Japanese who speak Japanese but tend to forget which style of speech

to use because their own language doesn't carry that type of speech.

The Impact of English on Japan

The study English is increasingly becoming a social norm in Japan. Everywher one goes one can see signs boasting English phrases and words. Some are interesting while others are ridiculously absurd and incorrect in grammar and syntax. Not only can one hear and see a variety of English language study programs on NHK, the national public broadcast station, but one can also hear gross pronunciations of English on television programs as well. As mentioned before in the introduction, Japan utilizes more than 30 thousand English words. Some of the words can easily be recognized by a native English speaker, while others have be "Japanized" or made to fit a Japanese concept. This migration to English has more or less abandoned there original Japanese translations as well as the valuable characters that accompany them which have, in turn, given way to Katakana, the Japanese syllabic set used for foreign words.

The education system of Japan is extremely stressful on students at the junior high and high school levels. Students not only undergo a rigorous advanced level of schooling but also reinforce those classes by attending specialty schools called yobiko. Because many western schools have a wide variety of curriculums to fit all types of students, it is possible to say that many western students may not be able to handle such a curriculum.

In western schools the study of a foreign language is only required if the student plans to attend university, and in regards to this, only a two-year course is required. In Japan a mandatory six-year course in English is required. This could be comparable to education systems which included the study of Latin in the United States and Europe. During this study, students learn a huge vocabulary of words we would rarely think of using as well as grammar concepts, some of which date back to the time when English was just being introduced to Japan. Before the introduction of English there were documented experiences of foreign languages in Japan, specifically Portuguese, Dutch and

Chinese, but because these nations were only interested in trade the necessity of learning each respective language by the common class was unnecessary. Obviously, the only ones necessary for speaking the language was the ones doing the business. Yet, the advent of Admiral Perry in 1863 brought more than trade. It brought modern technology. This technology wised up the Japanese government to the advantages of the modern world in luxury, transportation and most of all, warfare. The latter of which gave Japan the most concern. In this time period, called the Meiji period, we see the introduction of English in many universities. This was a scheme developed to enable Japanese scientists and engineers to be able to read and incorporate western technology. Therefore emphasis on learning English for communication purposes was ignored. It has only been in the past 15 years that reforms in English education have begun to take place. At first, classes focusing on the communication end of English were introduced in the junior high and high schools. This program was called the Japan English Teaching or "JET" program which hired native English speaking nationals from America, Canada, the U.K. and New Zealand. This program has become very popular and competitive for many college grads because of its light workload and its high pay and benefits. Though a good course, indeed, this left two important groups, children and adults, without a means of studying English. Thus a new and lucrative business opportunity arose, the Eikaiwa school. This type of school catered to teaching children and adults as well as secondary school students. For a rather high tuition one could study English privately or in small groups. Another plus to this new industry was that they, too, supplied classes taught by bonafied "native" speakers of English. Now one can find an English conversation school in just about any town, no matter how small, whether it be a big school like NOVA, AEON, or GEOS or a small local school run by a private citizen or foreigner.

Now there exists a variety of English schools in both the public and private sectors. This exposure has caused a new problem, though, the problem of assured improvement. Of course, parents want to see their children succeed in everything they do. But in the area of English this can be nearly impossible for the average and even above average student. This is mainly due to the exposure time the student has to English. If we break down the time in actual minutes, the average student has only 50 to 60 minutes exposure to English. That is in comparison to the five hours of student teacher time in subjects such as math and science. Also regular school studies are stressed more than that of English due to the belief that English is an unnecessary part of education. I can say there is nothing further from the truth concerning that. In fact, those who can speak English competently stand chance of better paying jobs, international experiences and better self-outlook. It is the agreement of linguists that children are the most susceptible to language acquisition. To better explain this we must think of our own language ability and how we came to be able to speak, read and write. In the case of speaking, we began by mimicking those around. As absurd as it may have seemed the observation of a baby saying words is seen as cute and impressive. But for an older child and even adult, it seems embarrassing. That is one of the obstacles we must conquer, though, in order to improve our English skills. But it is not right to say that the younger a child is the better chance they have to learn English especially when the exposure time is limited. In fact it is how much exposure time the child has to English that determines their skill and competence. To put it simply, if the child is being constantly exposed to English in both listening and speaking aspects the chances of him or her improving increases than those who simply come to class do the lesson and go home to receive no further reinforcement. Also, parent interest increases the child's interest to study English as most children wish to make their parents happy.

Another big problem that arises in both children and adult lessons is the tendency to not talk or get involved with the class. People seem to be nervous to make a mistake and therefore avoid

conversing to keep from it. It is a toss up between damaging pride, losing face and fear of being made fun of that, I believe, inhibit students from participating whole-heartedly. And this makes for a very difficult lesson indeed, especially for one who eagerly wants their students to communicate in English.

It can be said, too, from extensive experience and observation that English is more than a second language in Japan rather it is more of a status marker among the Japanese. Those who score high on national and international English exams such as the Eiken, TOEIC and TOEFL are eligible for higher salaries and positions in the company. They also have a greater chance to travel overseas to foreign-based branch companies. People who can speak English competently are also seen as being well educated, especially in the rural and countryside areas. The following case studies show some examples and goals of a very small portion of this vast group of students. The drawback to this is the stress that preparing for these kinds of tests causes. Basically, students rush to take these classes with only the idea of getting a higher score in a short time. They soon come to realize that their goal can only be achieved in the course of a year rather than the previously planned month-long study. This deters students from continuing and they soon fall into a rut, quitting the class and remaining in the same job only with new feelings of failure. Yet now, the stress on learning English is so high that many students tend to shun it and/ or develop feelings of angst against it. This is especially true when it is a heavy determining factor of whether or not they can enter a good university.

So how do we teach a group of individuals who want to speak English but are afraid to do so? Well if we look at Japanese culture we find that people do not like to speak out alone nor voice their own opinion for fear of opposition or ostracism by their class group. Ostracism could be in the form of straight forward ignoring or gossip. Well if we go by the book then I would say there must be a slow transition through all types of EFL teachers: explainer, involver and enabler. Once the students gain confidence in first you and then themselves it is possible to get to the ultimate goal of 100 percent class participation. It is necessary to go slow and only involve

questions that exhibit a concrete, easily understood and spoken answer. Use nothing that involves excessive thought or opinion. This is good for adult classes. I like to use my "be understood" approach which mimics a communicative method. Here I try to get my older students to forget about being fluent in a language because fluency, in my opinion, requires more than expert language skills. It also requires extensive knowledge and experience of the target language's culture. Knowing mannerisms, body language and when and how to use language in specific situations. This method has helped many of my students relax and just try to speak their mind.

For children the same is warranted but focus on easy vocabulary and simple phrases should be used. Since many Japanese children have an extensive after-school schedule which mainly involves a lot of "unfun" stuff they tend to be less energetic when it comes to English study. How have I remedied this? Simply put, I use the gaming approach. This may sound to the normal teacher as unproductive messing around, but by intertwining games into the lesson has caused a great increase in the interest levels of my students. Simple games involving flash cards or board drawing to physical games, some of which we all played as children. Japanese children like to play and jump around, therefore, harnessing that and using it for positive study purposes greatly enhances the class.

Fieldwork

Over the five years of English teaching I have had here in Japan I have come across many types of students with various goals for studying English. Some of these students I would to introduce and use as examples of how humans have a capability to learn a foreign language as well as effectively use that language in conversation.

Case study 1: Masako

My first year teaching in Japan was quite harrowing. I could speak very little competent Japanese, was unfamiliar with the territory and loaded with culture shock. Once I got past all of

that I was able to start examining my students abilities regarding there mental capability for learning English, their capability to use English in a conversation and physical limitations to speaking clearly.

The first student I would like to mention is Masako (I will refrain from using last names). Masako was a very diligent student of around age 40. She tried very hard and was able to communicate with me on a low level but could only manage that. I believe that because of her educational background and her career, she was a music teacher, she was able to be creative enough to step out from the usual Japanese sense of shyness and mistake making phobia to make her study successful.

Case study 2: Hisako

My second year of teaching took me to a small school in the resort city of Odawara in Kanagawa prefecture. One of my students, Hisako, was quite adept at learning English. She could converse well and made few grammatical mistakes but those were, for the most part, unnoticed. The only barrier she had was of a social one. Among groups mixed with Japanese and English speaking people she chose to shy away from English and speak Japanese. Instead she had her fiancé, who was also very adept at English, do the speaking. This is most likely due to the fear of making a mistake. It is at most, a social factor that, I feel, tends to inhibit the Japanese from being creative, particularly for women, and especially in the presence of men.

Case study 3: Yuuki

This observation reinforces the idea of a child's uncanny ability for learning language, and shows that some children are more gifted than others but only to the extent of how much influence is provided in the home. Yuuki was only four years old but miraculously passed the first in a three set series of English tests for children with a score over 100. The first test is usually for 1st and 2nd graders. He also remembers simple phrases and word.

This brings to mind two little boys, age two, they are paternal twins. They are friends of my daughter's. Their mother is quite adept at speaking English and exposes them to English on a daily basis to her twins. Now both boys can say English words and recognize ABC's on contact. If there is no interference peer-wise in the future, these two could possibly become bilingual without any hindrances.

Case study 4: The little school owner

This study will soon seem like a complaint and a piece of advice to the future Japan EFL teacher, of which I will expand of later. There are quite a few English schools littering Japan. It seems that anywhere one goes one can see the familiar Eikaiwa sign near a train station or on a main road. Even more so are the schools which boast foreign teachers which in some cases can make this noble profession of international humanities into a virtual freak show where one can come and see creatures from afar who babble in a strange tongue. My point here though isn't the students but the owners who open these schools, particularly the smaller ones. It seems to be the idea that if one can speak English to some extent and has the money and time will start an English school of some sort. This is the case of many a school owner I worked for. The problem is that these people, usually mothers with rich husbands and / or families open these schools with no business experience or ability. They place ads for native speakers to come and work for them and promise things that soon prove to be bait to get the teacher to come.

Their teaching ability usually amounts to tutoring a few neighborhood children and then it grows from there. Unfortunately, the incorrect pronunciations and incorrect usage of words and phrases sets young students into a bad habit and reinforces that of the older students. On top of that is the owner's ego which places them in a position of not trying to improve themselves and sets them up for future embarrassing situations. Also it places them in a difficult position with the foreign teaching staff, who usually end up suffering the most at the expense of the owner's ego and ignorance.

Advice to the Prospective EFL Japan Teacher

Although teaching overseas is exciting, rewarding and often time packed with cash, one needs to be very careful when selecting a job in Japan. First of all, one must remember that Japan is an all inclusive society for Japanese. Those of non, intra-island descent are classified in one group called gaijin. Gaijin literally means those people from the outside. The term groups anyone from the rest of the world into this one group. Similar to a Jew- Gentile relationship except not as strict. The Japanese group identity and social knit also emphasizes this thinking. Personally, I don't think this eccentric xenophobia is intended to show prejudice, rather it is a build-up of familiars against and unknown entity. In the end, though, it would seem to many as if they were being rather rude and prejudice in the truest sense. My advice, go prepared knowing that you cannot own you own business, rent an apartment or even frequent some places because you are not Japanese. Also, keep in mind that you will be considered as a novelty and, at the same time, a feared invader, not that extreme, though. But, people will seem slightly or grossly apprehensive upon sight of you. Even to those who have braved culture shock in many places, none will seem like the culture shock of Japan. This can be best proven from the additions made to jails and prisons, and the proposals by many business owners to close their stores during the recent World Cup tournament. This adequately expresses the eccentric xenophobia and fear that foreigners will cause a wealth of social problems. Of course, they are forgetting about the increasing rise of juvenile problems. Ironically, there were no foreign related criminal incidences during the whole tournament, which proved that gaijin aren't really out to wreak havoc. I am sure this was felt financially by the loss of revenue.

Second, one must carefully research the company they are interested in. All managers and owners express warm feeling and boast that their company is wonderful and family oriented. They want you to feel cared for and a part of their family. But this feeling lasts for about two weeks. Then the owner rarely recognizes you and the manager becomes your best friend or your worst enemy. This is especially true if the manager, which is

most cases, is a middle aged housewife who may or may not speak English. Please remember this is mostly for small schools and not true for all cases. Generally, she is trying to make a very small income to give her extra shopping money and something to keep her from getting bored. Yet, in all honesty, she is the epitome of distrust and treachery. If she chooses not to like you, for any reason, you will be a target for her complaints and browbeating until you leave the company. Unfortunately, there is little you can do since, again, you are not Japanese and therefore not part of the archipelago group. This ultimately means that the boss listens to her more than you, this in some cases is due to language inefficiencies. These people like to be in positions of authority and exert power but in many cases don't know how to handle it properly and in turn show their ignorance. Lastly, for those with commanding, straightforward personalities, don't be surprised if you find yourself in this situation at least once. Just like any other business, they are making money and quantity, student enrollment, is more important than quality and if your not helping the machine you will get replaced A.S.A.P.

Last, be careful with the salary offered by the school of choice. In the past it was commonplace and law, although many managers dispute this part, to pay the EFL teacher a base salary of 250,000 yen per month for a schedule of 25 contact hours, doesn't matter how long you are physically at the school. I, in some cases have had two and three hours in the morning only to have to come back and teach from 3:00 to 10:00 the same day. Strategically set schedules will put you just at the brink of overtime. Often schools included travel fees and overtime pay for hours exceeding 30 per week. Of course this does not include school functions which are held on your holiday. Although you are the novelty of the show, extracurricular functions are always required and never paid. With the advent of a crashing economy EFL teacher's pay has come under fire and many schools are trying to get around this standard pay. Now many are offering less monthly salary attached with a contract finish bonus which, basically, is the sum of the pay you would have received if you had a standard 250 man³ salary. Some simply make the job part

³ man, the a is pronounced a as in father, is the Japanese word for 10,000. So, one man yen

time to avoid paying high salaries and sponsoring visas altogether. And still some just pay low salaries which prove to be insufficient to live even in the countryside. To put it simply, at the wrong school you will be severely overworked and underpaid.

But don't let this stop you from going to Japan. It is a wonderful country and not all of the people fit into the category mentioned above. In fact, many of the people you will teach are returnees from various countries and are themselves, having difficulties readjusting to their own society. They may become your best friends. Just go with the idea that you are an outsider and be a little patient and flexible, finally be cautious with the school you choose, ask those questions since they seem to want you, and your stay will be most pleasant.

Conclusion

English is a word that strikes fear into many Japanese. A fear of making a mistake that will cause them to lose face in front of a foreigner. To some, though, it isn't even a method of communication, rather a form of entertainment. It is a major cause of stress and frustration to school students, yet it is also a doorway to a fascinating and sometimes lucrative future. One who can speak English competently or score high on an English based exam is seen as very intelligent. An entire industry has developed around this language with the many so called "conversation schools" have popped up all over Japan offering one service, improve your level of English.

It is amazing to me when I look back and see all of the students I have taught good or bad, achiever and struggler. They all had and intention of learning my language to communicate with people like me and improve themselves, that makes me feel good. Seeing their success gives me a feeling of success. These accounts and the ones in the future are my reasons for being here in Japan.

equals 10,000 yen or the equivalent to \$100 dollars on a 100 yen=\$1.00 exchange.

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I also wish to thank all students who participated in my interviews, may your studies in English be successful and profitable.



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